

Press Release



Tennessee Healthy Watershed Initiative

New Initiative Designed to Maintain and Improve Tennessee Rivers and Streams

A new collaborative effort, the Tennessee Healthy Watershed Initiative (THWI), aims to maintain and improve water resources across the state by bringing together the public, landowners, resource management agencies, and conservation-focused organizations.

THWI is the result of a partnership between the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the West Tennessee River Basin Authority (WTRBA). The goal is to promote communication, collaboration, and thoughtful water resources planning among a broad partnership of agencies and stakeholders.

“The collective goal of the current stakeholders is to ensure that streams and rivers are managed to conserve the native species, natural plant communities, and ecosystems found in and along the river system while continuing to meet the increasing needs of our communities,” said Environment and Conservation Commissioner Bob Martineau. “Healthy watersheds in Tennessee will need to be resilient, able to adapt to changing conditions, and will need to provide adequate and reliable water supplies for healthy communities, a strong economy and interconnections between rivers and their users.”

“By coordinating our efforts in nutrient and sediment reduction, stream restoration, and stormwater and runoff management, we hope to build a more widespread network of projects and partners addressing water quality issues,” said Brenda Brickhouse, TVA Vice President of Environmental Permits and Compliance. “We also want to use our combined expertise to inform the public and landowners about how they can contribute to healthier aquatic environments.”

THWI was launched under a memorandum of understanding executed by the four lead groups in August 2011. The signatories have spent the past year in a strategic planning phase to ensure the success of the initiative, as well as carefully selecting and funding the two following “kick-off” projects that are currently being implemented:

- Cane Creek in Jackson, TN: stream and bottomland hardwood restoration, live stake nursery, bioinfiltration, walking trails, wetland enhancement
- James E. Ward Agriculture Center in Wilson County, TN: constructed wetlands, rain gardens, pervious pavement parking, stormwater best management practices demonstration projects, walking trails

THWI will host a ceremony at the Cane Creek project location on July 30, 2012, to showcase restoration of a channelized stream back to a natural meandering flow and several stormwater management techniques that can be applied on a larger scale across Tennessee. For the

The Tennessee Healthy Watershed Initiative envisions sustainable river systems throughout Tennessee in which the streams and rivers are managed to conserve the native species, natural plant communities, and ecosystems found in and along the river system while meeting the needs of human communities. For more information visit: <http://www.tn.gov/environment/thwi/>.

second project, various green infrastructure best management practices, rain gardens, and bioswales will be on public display at the James E. Ward Agriculture Center in the near future.

“Ultimately, this is about better, cleaner, healthier water for all Tennesseans,” said Brickhouse. “Improving the condition of the local streams will drive up the quality of watersheds across the state. Each enhancement project has an impact both at that site and downstream.”

THWI has additional funding available at this time to support the implementation of certain projects that are designed to accomplish the following goals:

- Protect and maintain the state’s healthy watersheds
- Prevent watersheds from becoming impaired
- Accelerate restoration successes on impaired streams

Applications for Request for Proposals will be available July 16, 2012. Please visit our webpage at <http://www.tn.gov/environment/thwi/> for additional details. The initiative encourages public support and participation from other water quality-focused organizations. Opportunities also will be available to attend annual THWI meetings, communicate with THWI coordinator Trisha Johnson, and access the THWI website for educational information and best practices.

“We are excited to support projects intended to protect and improve our water resources in Tennessee,” said Gina Hancock, State Director for The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee. “Healthy watersheds provide a multitude of economic, social, health and recreational benefits to our communities across the state.”

For more information about the Tennessee Healthy Watershed Initiative or to discuss projects and involvement opportunities, please contact THWI Coordinator Trisha Johnson at (931) 854-1552 or trisha_johnson@tnc.org.